

Unish

Unish is a constructed language developed by a research team at Sejong University, South Korea. The term “Unish” is used in reference to it being cast as a universal language in the globalized era.

The vocabulary of Unish is chosen from among 15 languages: Esperanto and 14 major languages that have 70 million or more native speakers or which were international languages in the past. Decisions are based on the three principles of commonality, short-word length, and simplicity. Consequently, the core vocabulary of Unish is integrated with the simplest words of existing major languages. To date, Unish has a vocabulary of approximately 10,000 words. Sejong University has also offered Unish classes for several years.

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Linguistic properties

Classification

Unish is a constructed language and not genealogically related to any particular ethnic language. The phonological and grammatical structures are based on those of pidgins.

Typologically, in Unish, prepositions and adjectives are placed before the nouns they modify. The word order of a sentence is “subject-verb-object/complement.” This word order is always kept, regardless of a declarative sentence or an interrogative sentence. New terms are formed through the careful selection of words among the aforementioned fifteen languages by seven principles such as: commonality, short word-length, diversity, distinctiveness, simplicity, cultural priority, and compounding.

Writing system

The Unish alphabet consists exactly of the twenty-six letters of the ISO basic Latin alphabet, which are as follows:

Unish alphabet																													
Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	8	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	-	-	-
Upper case	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>K</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>Q</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>V</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Z</u>	SH	CH	NG
Lower case	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	sh	ch	ng
IPA phoneme	<u>ⱱ</u>	<u>Ɱ</u>	-	<u>Ɽ</u>	<u>ⱥ</u>	<u>ⱦ</u>	<u>Ⱨ</u>	<u>ⱨ</u>	<u>Ⱪ</u>	<u>ⱪ</u>	<u>ⱬ</u>	<u>Ɑ</u>	<u>Ɱ</u>	<u>Ɐ</u>	<u>Ɒ</u>	kw	<u>Ⱳ</u>	<u>ⱳ</u>	<u>ⱴ</u>	<u>Ⱶ</u>	<u>ⱶ</u>	<u>ⱷ</u>	ks	j	z	ʃ	<u>ʧ</u>	ŋ	

It uses three digraphs: ⱱ, Ɱ, Ⱪ

Phonology

Unish has twenty-two pulmonic consonants, five vowels, and two semi-vowels. Unish also accepts commonly-used vowels and consonants that tend to be easier to pronounce.

Unish	
Created by	Language Research Institute, Sejong University
Date	1996
Setting and usage	International auxiliary language
Users	<i>None</i>
Purpose	constructed language ▪ International auxiliary language ▪ Unish
Writing system	Latin
Sources	Vocabulary from fifteen representative languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, German, Russian, Arabic, Hindi, Greek, Latin, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Esperanto.
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	<i>None</i> (mis)
Glottolog	<i>None</i>

Vowels

The vowel structure of Unish consists of five vowels that are most commonly used in pidgins as well as in natural languages: [i, e, a, o, u].

Semi-vowels

In addition to the five vowels, Unish also accepts the semi-vowels [j] and [w] in making more elaborate sounds.

Consonants

Unish accepts consonants that are easy to pronounce and common to natural languages. For example, the dental sounds of [θ] and [ð] are not generally easy to acquire and pronounce. Hence, these sounds are not included in the consonant system of Unish. Moreover, the correspondence between sounds and spellings are as straightforward as possible, as listed below. The aim is such that anyone with a basic knowledge of the Latin script will find the relations between consonants and letters quite accessible.

List

IPA name	IPA symbol	Relation between IPA and Unish representation	Spelling	Unish classification
<u>Close front unrounded vowel</u>	[i]	same	i	vowel
<u>Close-mid front unrounded vowel</u>	[e]	same	e	vowel
<u>Open front unrounded vowel</u>	[a]	same	a	vowel
<u>Close-mid back rounded vowel</u>	[o]	same	o	vowel
<u>Close back rounded vowel</u>	[u]	same	u	vowel
<u>Voiced palatal approximant</u>	[j]	different	y	semi-vowel
<u>Voiced labio-velar approximant</u>	[w]	same	w	semi-vowel
<u>Voiced bilabial stop</u>	[b]	same	b	consonant
<u>Voiceless palato-alveolar affricate</u>	[tʃ]	different	ch	consonant
<u>Voiced alveolar stop</u>	[d]	same	d	consonant
<u>Voiceless labiodental fricative</u>	[f]	same	f	consonant
<u>Voiced velar stop</u>	[g]	same	g	consonant
<u>Voiceless glottal fricative</u>	[h]	same	h	consonant
<u>Voiced palato-alveolar affricate</u>	[dʒ]	different	j	consonant
<u>Voiceless velar stop</u>	[k]	same	k	consonant
<u>Voiced alveolar lateral approximant</u>	[l]	same	l	consonant
<u>Voiced bilabial nasal</u>	[m]	same	m	consonant
<u>Voiced alveolar nasal</u>	[n]	same	n	consonant
<u>Voiced velar nasal</u>	[ŋ]	different	ng	consonant
<u>Voiceless bilabial stop</u>	[p]	same	p	consonant
–	[kʷ]	different	q	consonant
<u>Voiced alveolar trill</u>	[r]	same	r	consonant
<u>Voiceless alveolar sibilant</u>	[s]	same	s	consonant
<u>Voiceless palato-alveolar sibilant</u>	[ʃ]	different	sh	consonant
<u>Voiceless alveolar stop</u>	[t]	same	t	consonant
<u>Voiced labiodental fricative</u>	[v]	same	v	consonant
–	[ks]	different	x	consonant
<u>Voiced alveolar sibilant</u>	[z]	same	z	consonant

Grammar

The grammar of Unish was constructed on the basis of the principles of simplicity, logicity, and regularity. For example, irrespective of number (plural or singular) or person (first-person, second-person, or third-person) of a subject, the form of the verb corresponding to the subject does not vary. Nouns have only one marked case, the genitive, which is identical to the plural, following the principles of simplicity and logicity.

Interrogative Sentence

Unish sentences consist of a subject (S), a verb (V), and an object (O)—ordered (S-V-O). This word order is preserved in declarative sentences (DS) as well as in interrogative sentences (IS). In Unish, the difference between a declarative sentence and an interrogative sentence is that the former ends with a period and falling intonation, while the latter ends with a question mark and rising intonation.

[DS] *Tim lov beisbol game.*
 love baseball game
 "Tim loves the baseball game."
 [IS] *Tim lov beisbol game?*
 "Does Tim love the baseball game?"

As a result of this rule, interrogative pronouns (who, what, when, where, why, and how) appear *in situ*, as opposed to always being placed initially within a sentence.

Sarah lov wu? / cf. Wu lov Sarah?
 love who who love
 "Who does Sarah love?" / "Who loves Sarah?"

Passive Sentence

In Unish, a prefix is attached to a main verb in making a passive sentence. A passive sentence is formed from an active sentence by inserting the verb “es” in front of the active verb and changing the subject-object order. In specifying the agent in a passive sentence, the preposition “de” is used.

Mi lov Susan. / Susan es lov (de mi).
 I love → be love by me
 "I love Susan." / "Susan is loved (by me)."

Personal Pronoun

In Unish, there is no gender distinction in pronouns, and the plural form of a pronoun is created by attaching an “-s” to its singular form.

	Singular	Plural
First-person	mi	mis
Second-person	de	des
Third-person	le	les

Like the plural form of common nouns, a plural personal pronoun is obtained by attaching the suffix “-s” to a singular pronoun. The plural forms of all nouns are made simply by attaching that suffix to their singular forms. There is only one third-person singular pronoun, therefore the referent of that pronoun is determined based on the context in which it is used.

Vocabulary

The Research Team at Sejong University claims that, as the number of developed lexical items has exceeded 9,600, the lexical inventory of Unish provides a sufficient base for everyday conversation. New words are also under constant development for utilization within the context of various speaking and writing topics.

Unish vocabulary is derived from fifteen languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, German, Russian, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Hindi, Greek, Latin and Esperanto.^[1] Words are selected from among multiple terms borrowed from these languages, in accordance with seven criteria: commonality, short word-length, diversity, distinctiveness, simplicity, cultural priority, compounding.

Sample Text

The following short story—with an accompanying Unish translation—is extracted from Aesop's Fables.

English

The Geese and the Cranes. Some geese and cranes were feeding together in the same field, when a bird-catcher suddenly came to them. Since the cranes were slim and light, they could fly right off and escape the bird-catcher’s nets. The geese, however, weighed down by their fat, could not take off so easily and were all captured.

Unish Translation

Guss e krans. Som guss e krans esed fiding junt in same fild, wen tori-kachor sudnli komed to les. Koz krans esed slim e lite, les kaned flai skoro e eskaped tori-kachor’s nets. But guss non kaned eskap izli e al es kaptur koz les es overpeso.

Further reading

- Young-Hee Jung. (2004) English, Unish, and an Ideal International Language: From a Perspective of Speech Sound and Writing System.
- Purev Jaimai & Hyun Seok Park. (2003) Representing Unish Grammars Based on Tree Adjoining Grammar Formalisms.
- Stuart Read. (2001) Like WTO, Why not WCO?
- Young-Hee Jung. (2004) Borrowing for a Universal Language.
- Andrew Large. (1996) The Prospects for an International Language.
- Kwak, E. 2003. Comparison between Pidgins and ‘Unish’. Journal of Universal Language 4, 17-31.

External links

- [Unish official site \(http://www.unish.net/e_index.jsp\)](http://www.unish.net/e_index.jsp) (in English)
- [Unish Dictionary Search \(https://web.archive.org/web/20151227142715/http://203.250.148.79/search/e_unish_Dic_Search.jsp\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20151227142715/http://203.250.148.79/search/e_unish_Dic_Search.jsp)
- [Unish Vocabulary Recommendation \(https://web.archive.org/web/20151227153203/http://203.250.148.79/part_Plaza/e_word_Recom_mand.jsp\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20151227153203/http://203.250.148.79/part_Plaza/e_word_Recom_mand.jsp)

References

1. Haitao Liu 2006 - <http://www.lingviko.net/Neutrality.pdf>

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